



2018 MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT



County Executive Jan H. Gardner

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LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP



ETHICS

The County Executive's top priority for the 2018 legislative session was to strengthen the ethics laws in Frederick County. Citizens must be able to trust their government. Executive Gardner pledged during her campaign to restore trust in government and has worked persistently since taking office to strengthen Frederick County's ethics laws. Trust in government is absolutely fundamental to good government. Frederick County continues to lead the way as one of only three counties in the state that addresses the conflict of interest that can arise when developers try to influence land use decisions. We must continue to prevent a culture of corruption from taking hold in Frederick County Government.

This bill strengthens provisions in state law that prohibit an agent of a certain applicant from making a contribution to a member of the governing body of Frederick County during the pendency of a land use decision. The legislation also requires certain members of the Frederick County Board of Zoning Appeals, Ethics Commission, or Planning Commission or the Board of License Commissioners for Frederick County who establish an authorized candidate campaign committee to vacate office no more than 48 hours after opening a campaign account.

This legislation (**SB289**) went through a long public process in Frederick County and was supported by the county's Ethics Task Force, the League of Women Voters and many interested citizens. The CE strongly advocated for the support of this legislation collaborating with the Frederick County Delegation, relevant House and Senate Committees throughout the 90-day session. The legislation received bipartisan support and is an important step to strengthen ethics laws in Frederick County.



EDUCATION

The County Executive was a member of the state's 21st Century School Facilities Commission, which began in 2016. The objectives of the Commission included, but were not limited to:

- Reviewing the findings of the 2004 Task Force to Study Public School Facilities and how those findings have been implemented;

- Reviewing construction industry best practices and their applicability to public school and charter school construction;
- Formulating long-term plans for jurisdictions with growing enrollment, as well as developing maintenance plans for jurisdictions with flat or declining enrollment;
- Identifying innovative financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships and other alternatives to traditional financing through general obligation debt; and
- Evaluating the relationship between state agencies and local governments on school construction projects.

The outcome of the Commission was legislation HB1783 – 21st Century Schools Act. The benefits to Frederick County include the following.

- Earmarks \$400M for school construction statewide
- Defines high performance building standards
- Creates incentive programs for school delivery methods and other measures to decrease school construction costs.
- Establishes a school facilities inventory database



TRANSPORTATION

- **Highway User Revenue Fund – SB516** Passed. This was a key legislative priority this session. Highway user revenue funds are used to augment County road maintenance and improvement programs, including annual operations and capital improvements. Without highway user revenue funds, the scope of these programs and improvement projects has been significantly reduced or deferred. While the level of revenue collected by the State has remained more or less steady, the amount of revenue passed on to the Counties and municipalities has been drastically reduced. For example, the level of funding received by Frederick County reached its peak in 2007, when highway user revenue funding was approximately \$13.8 million.

Frederick County made progress to restore highway user revenue funding, securing \$2,203,663 for the upcoming fiscal year. That is an increase of \$41,595 or 1.9% over the current year. The County also received \$1,474,857 in capital grants. The General Assembly took a step forward this session by passing SB516. This legislation will restore an estimated \$76.5M highway user revenue funding over the next five-year period to counties, municipalities, and Baltimore City. In FY 2023, the estimated highway user revenue funding for Frederick County will be \$7.5M.

- **Paratransit Services** – Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) for seniors and people with disabilities is most often provided by Locally Operated

Transit Systems' paratransit service, which is funded by the State and Counties. In Frederick County, the Statewide Specialized Transportation Assistance Program (SSTAP) funds 30% and the County funds 70% for this transportation program. This funding has been relatively flat for many years, and there are no new funding resources on the horizon. A large percentage of these non-emergency trips are to dialysis centers. In Frederick County, 27% of the paratransit trips provided by our transit system are to dialysis centers, an increase of nearly 10% in 5 years.

At the same time the senior population is the fastest growing segment of the population, currently 1.19 million and expected to grow by another 16% by 2020 to 1.38 million. Hospitals and doctors' offices are challenged to get patients to their appointments. The need for this critical Non-Emergency Medical Transportation is quickly growing.

A Paratransit Commission was established to study NEMT and to identify opportunities for public-private partnerships, or other ways, to cost-share with medical providers whose patients require transportation to get to their medical treatments, and to determine an appropriate methodology for collecting and distributing any cost sharing to the Locally Operated Transit Systems.



NEXT GENERATION 9-1-1

Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 Across Maryland - Establishment – The General Assembly passed **SB285** to establish a commission to study and make recommendations regarding the next generation 9-1-1 emergency communication services statewide. Frederick County provided leadership in shaping this legislation being the first and the only jurisdiction in the state to implement text to 9-1-1. The County will play an important role in developing the deliverables from this important commission. There are two deliverables:

- December 1, 2018, the commission must submit a preliminary report to the Governor and the General Assembly that details the financing and procurement of a next generation 9-1-1 system.
- A final report is due by December 1, 2019 detailing the implementation, management, and operation of the system.